

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN ORATION

BY JOHN E. BURTON
OF LAKE GENEVA, WIS.

1903

With other men it was literary achievement; the triumph of war; the aggrandizement of conquest; the glory of new discovery, or the flight of imagination in the kingdom of Art or Song; but with Lincoln it was character, CHARACTER, CHARACTER. This is why his name grows with each succeeding year.

M1800
(1)

Copyright 1903,
by
JOHN E. BURTON.





A. Lincoln

(Portrait of ABRAHAM LINCOLN taken from an original daguerreotype, owned and in possession of John E. Burton, Lake Geneva, Wis., 1903.)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AN ORATION*—BY JOHN E. BURTON

OF LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN

THE character of Abraham Lincoln stands so high above all possible wrong doing that honesty was never mentioned or thought of as a *virtue* in him.

He was not only the best product of pure American civilization which his century produced, but he was, all in all, the best public man and sincerest statesman who has ever figured in the destiny of this nation or in the history of the world.

To all right-minded Americans he is the ripe and rounded product of *what every man would like to be*, and he will therefore remain, through all time, the symbol of perfected character. The whole world loves Lincoln because he did what the world knows was right, and he avoided doing what the world knows to be wrong, and it is therefore doubtful if any human being will ever again hold a similar position of greatness in a similar and transcendent epoch, or ever fulfill the world's expectations so completely, as did Lincoln.

His fame grows so steadily, so perfectly, so

* The substance of this article was given in an address to the Post Graduate Chatauqua Circle in April, 1896, at the Ladies Seminary (Oakwood) Building, Lake Geneva, Wis., in their Public Literary Entertainment and Lecture Course.

naturally, and so mightily, and the very fiber of his character comes out so brilliantly as the searchlight of time reveals him from every possible point of view that the fear among thoughtful men is, that, with the lapse of centuries, his fame may pass the boundary line allotted to flesh and blood and become obscured by entering the realm of the mythical, where he may be lost to the world of struggling men among the gods and the myths which always inhabit the past.

He was the child of Love before he was the child of Law. Born not only in poverty, but surrounded by want and suffering; favored in nothing, wanting in everything which makes up the joys of life, he trudged as a child the trail of sorrow, and was the playmate of Grief, and always above and around his mysterious young life there hung the shadow of a dark and mystic cloud.

It was a literal truth that "he had not where to lay his head," and while he did not eat the "locust and wild honey," and while his raiment was not of "camel's hair," yet his clothing was, almost exclusively, "the skin of wild beasts," from his buckskin pants to the ponderous coon skin cap. A meaner or darker origin cannot well be imagined. Not one ray of genuine hope can be discovered to light his childhood. Nature seems to have bruised and hurt him so that in manhood he might gird himself to bind up the wounds of a bleeding nation. She seems to have handicapped and loaded his patient soul that he might justly hate the oppressors of men in his loftiest estate. She seems to have starved him that he might the better feel the hunger and the yearnings of a down-trodden race. His eyes

were allowed to look at the sunlight through the greased paper windows of the primitive hut and log school-house that he might, in his conquering prime, appreciate the glory of the noonday sun of Universal Freedom. Nature was his Mother, his Teacher, his Playmate, his All, and with a yearning that was never satiate he grew in stature among the grand old trees of the forest, ever surrounded by bird song, flower and fern, and with unsandaled feet he walked the rough trail of the pioneer boy, straight through over rock and glen, to the mountain top of Perfect Sincerity, and as a man stood as natural as a child, yet possessed all the powers and knowledge of his sex and his race in their fullness and purity. Almost without playmates, he was the companion of unadorned Nature, and *with the intuition of the child of Nature*, his heart expanded to the influence of the flight of fowl, the basking fish, the habits of the timid deer, the ways of the wild turkey, and bounded with joy in the season of bloom of the wild crab and the sumac; and resting lazily in the Autumn and Indian Summer among the ripening nuts and the purpling grape, he studied with a joy, strange and profound, the wondrous movements of planet, moon and star. With a growth exceeding six feet and four inches he found himself almost like one awakening from a dream, a giant in stature with muscles of iron made memorable by felling the tree and splitting the rail for sturdy use.

Thus he matured, like a prophet of old, and kept ever close to the great heart of Nature. As a matured man he could not sleep when the storm had blown the nest and the nestlings from the tree until he had restored them to the mother bird, and could not rest in the prime of his

matchless manhood until a race of four millions of fathers, mothers and children were restored to their natural rights after the thunderstorm of war had passed ; and if we do not anchor his mortal memory to the ocean bed of solid fact and history, I fear the day will yet come when some wild burst in the ruffled flow of human turmoil will claim him as a Christ. Scarcely an attribute of the divine character is wanting in this unique man, who, in all the loneliness of his early life, was unconsciously schooled, trained, perfected and graduated in all that was honest, natural, capable and kind. As a flat-boatman in the city of New Orleans he saw, for the first time, negro boys and girls and young women put up and sold as chattels upon the auction block, and then and there the mordant sunk deep into his very soul, and he said to his companion, "*That's wrong, and if ever I get a chance to hit it, by God, I'll hit it hard.*" The "painted lizard" of human slavery had been photographed forever on his mind and memory and he bided his time with the patience of a God until the day should come and until the hour had struck when, with a single blow, he could make good that oath ; and so, later in life, we see him, amid the billows and blood of war, as he calmly says, "*Wait and see the salvation of God.*" And so it is that *the human race is waiting to see*, as the years go by, the salvation of eternal right forever triumphant over wrong and *made possible by his patience and perfect humanity.*

His patience, however, did not weaken him or class him as quiescent, for when imposed upon and crowded toward insult or cowardice, or if his cause, when justly stated, was assailed by injustice or brutality the sleeping lion showed

his fangs and his giant wrath seldom found any bully rash enough to stand in his way when he accepted challenge. His powerful exhibition when forced by taunt to twice throw the champion Needham, at Wabash Point; his righteous rage at New Salem when the leader of the bullies of Clary's Grove, Jack Armstrong, tried by foul means to get the advantage over him, and again when his excited men in the Black Hawk War attempted to kill the friendly Indian, defying practically the brawn and muscle of the whole regiment, all prove his practical manliness, if occasion demanded; and such was his physical prowess that few men in all that Western country ever wished to dispute his standing.

The great dream of the centuries seems to have blossomed in his eventful life, and the more we learn of it the more we come to realize and to know that in him was the Perfect Man in the sane and soundest sense of the word, physically, mentally and morally. Poverty made him good; suffering made him great; circumstances made him President; fidelity made him beloved; courage made him heroic, and Martyrdom made him Immortal.

You may search the minutest records of recorded time and you cannot find another character who made so few mistakes during the chaos of such trying ordeals, or who possessed on all great occasions that sublimity of faith and courage of action, as mark and make the character of Abraham Lincoln; neither can you find another man who could control, and even guide to glory, all his impetuous subordinates in the heat of conflict and yet without offense compel them to unconscious obedience in the fulfillment

of a destiny which he alone could read in the dusk of deathless performance.

The record of this world does not show another character who was *schooled in almost continuous failure in youth and early manhood*, in order that he might the better serve as the successful and Great Commander in the most momentous epoch of human progress.

Nowhere in the library of nations can you find another character so varied in all experiences and yet where every experience was clearly given for the perfect formation of a character unique and matchless. Look back over forty years and see a boy ever obedient, even where obedience was not especially commendable, yet *always* obedient; as a son, wise, thoughtful and obliging; as a pupil, almost a prodigy, and with a burning zeal for useful knowledge beyond all precedent; as a boatman, capable of utilizing the rough experience of the Mississippi River; as a soldier in the Black Hawk War, little better than a failure because his heart was too big to exercise the cruelties of Indian warfare; as a lover, sincere, poetic and ideal, almost to the border line of insanity; as a debater, candid, clear, original, truthful; as a writer, fair, witty, useful; as a candidate, weak but earnest and ever conscious of his superiority; as an antagonist, formidable, real, full of surprises and dangerous; as a victor, modest, gracious and benevolent; as a man, possibly crafty, for a good purpose, but always natural, frank and winning, and always commanding and conscious of his higher qualifications; as a leader, slow, *always preparing*, always aware of the gravity of the situation, action well timed and always sustained; as a patriot, ambitious, but an ambi-

tion that never crowded or even approached the limit of his patriotism, therefore absolutely safe in all emergencies ; as a martyr, beautiful beyond that of saint or scientist, and as a memory his was and is the dearest, the gentlest and the most Godlike.

I have seen Abraham Lincoln and heard his voice. This is to me a happy recollection. From my childhood to this hour I have always kept every printed word which has fallen from his lips. It is the literary pride of my life that I have preserved with loving care all the books, works, biographies and printed souvenirs of *this real man* of men, until now I have passed the 1,000-volume line and still know that the future is growing with new works perenially. With other men it was literary achievement; the triumphs of war; the aggrandizement of conquest; the glory of new discovery, or the flight of imagination in the kingdom of Art or Song ; but with Lincoln it was character, *character*, CHARACTER. This is why his name grows with each succeeding year. This is why our American schools, as well as the schools in foreign lands, are making the 12th day of February a green spot in the dusty road of school routine, and are telling to the millions of boys and girls the story of a true patriot, a pure man, a character beyond reproach, the safest model of citizenship, the Agamemnon of moral power throughout the world.

It is the pride of millions of men and women to be able to say, "*I have seen Abraham Lincoln and heard his voice.*" Time will enhance the value of everything he ever touched and hallow his every word. No other character is known to the children of men who was more bashful or

tenderly sensitive or who more actually dreaded direct compliment. No man ever possessed a supremer contempt or indifference to unjust criticism or slander, and no man ever lived who was more conscious of his own actual worth and his ability to use that worth for the good of others. No man at his death was ever so universally or so sincerely mourned as Lincoln. The world wept as a young child at its father's bier. His funeral train was fourteen hundred miles long, and his mourners moistened with sincerity's tears the soil of every civilized land; while official history required 960 pages to print the plain record of telegram, resolution and sorrow of the Nations.

He was not really an orator, as the world goes, yet his speech on the battlefield of Gettysburg and his Second Inaugural Address are terse and treasured classics and rank with any sayings that Time has preserved from the lips or the pen of Cicero, Pericles, Philip or Phocian. No orator ever touched the tender chords which sweep the heartstrings in the soul of womanhood more deftly than he, when he said, while pleading the case of the widow of the old soldier of 1812: "*Time rolls on. The heroes of 1776 have passed away and are encamped on the other shore. The old soldier has gone to his rest—crippled, blinded and broken his widow comes to me and to you, gentlemen of the jury, to right her wrongs. She was not always thus. She was once beautiful as the morning. Her step was as light, her face as fair and her voice as sweet as ever rung in the lanes of old Virginia. Now she is poor, defenceless. Shall we, too, cast her off?*

" His courtroom was in tears. His suit was won.

No man ever held woman in higher esteem

than Abraham Lincoln, and woman to-day is his loyal lover and defence, through ill and good report, and through her there shall be engraved the ideal Lincoln in the minds of millions yet unborn.

If all men could be like Lincoln there would be no need of Heaven. His pattern was formed in the Foundry of Fate, and when the world's greatest epoch had closed the mould was found to fit "the head of the corners." See his tall form sway under a sorrow almost infinite as he stands at the coffin of his dead benefactor, Bowlin Greene, and although a man of thirty-three his heart breaks with uncontrolled emotion as he tries to speak the words of gratitude and tender eulogy which he longed to express, but in the agony of his soul's despair he fails to make a sound, and, in a burst of overwhelming tears and groans, he leaves the scene. Never did a human heart offer to the dead a truer tribute. Language can never tell the depth of his feelings, and history will never record a wail more tender or a lay more sweet and divine.

When the tender life of his first pure love went out and Ann Rutledge was laid in her grave, his was the pathetic voice which, in poignant grief, cried aloud as his vanishing reason all but left him: "*I cannot let the rains, the snow and the storms beat upon her grave!*" A deeper anguish never pierced the heart of an honest man, since Christ wept in Gethsemane.

Oh, what a legacy, what a heritage for us and ours and our heirs forever after us, and for the world, as Time the Saviour, reveals his growing worth. Oh, the great, broad, patient, courageous man, so calm in the tempest that radicals could not rush him and the Trumpet

of War could not intimidate him. His was the courage of the sublimest order; absolutely perfect in faith and that faith founded upon eternal justice and upon his perfect trust in a God of Justice, and in his own people and upon his own true and righteous self. You have but to put your ear to the welded rail of the past and the echoes of forty years will come back to you, and above the din and confusion of that awful period you will hear the clear, patriotic voice of a nation and that triumphant song,

*“We are coming, Father Abraham,
Three hundred thousand more.”*

This mighty surge of song is not the wail of despair nor the measured tone of defiance, but the belated and mighty response of thirty millions of patriots sounding the cry which comes from the deep, welling passion of patriotism, echoing across plain and river, and over hill and mountain top, that a million defenders invincible as an army with banners were coming in response to his righteous call to save from dissolution and death *the one nation which was and is, and is to be, THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.*

How strange it all seems to us now. The world will always see him, in the National storm of passion and the flow of fraternal blood, *a moral hero*, and in the blast that blinded, he held the helm of State for four dark and terrible years, and until Fate had become fulfillment, and then in the Sunshine of Peace he appeared in the capital of rebellion like a closing tableau, holding the trusting hand of his innocent boy while the frenzied negro bows in almost idolatrous worship at his feet, and then he is suddenly lifted, as by some design of fatality, to the realm of earthly immortality. It verily seems as if Fate did play

with dates and events, for on the anniversary of the very day when the starry flag of Fort Sumter bowed to the bellowing guns of Beauregard four years before, Beecher and his compatriots restored it, in the harbor of Charleston, to the breeze of Heaven, and yet before its folds had fairly caught the joyous inspiration, and while darkness settled upon the land that night, his life went out by the hand of the assassin.

No man is ever seen so tenderly as when humanity beholds him through the mellow vail of suffering and undeserved adversity. It is then we realize the force of the sentiment that

"Chords that vibrate sweetest music
Sound the deepest notes of woe."

It can never be said that religious fanaticism aided him essentially in the completion of his world task; neither that personal ambition rallied him to sudden success, and although success was his ruling motive, and was, all in all, and through it all, his guiding star, yet that success was founded upon the solid rock of truth, and through the darkness of that wildest and most tempestuous night of sorrow and suffering he stood, the central figure, looking over and above the heads of his contemporaries, like the giant he was, surveying the end and seeing the triumphant vision which was to mark the closing of the most remarkable conflict which ever sanctified the battle ground of nations.

It is true that there have been other patriots in other lands than ours, and it is true that patriotism has lived as a principle in all the ages of the past, and that there has existed the calm of dignity and the consciousness of power all

through the centuries, *but there has never been but one Lincoln.*

Other men have been earnest and other men have been great, and even sincere, and what is still more, have been kind and useful to their fellow men and have helped to grace and crown the ages, and yet, *I say, there has never been but one Lincoln.*

He did not believe in Christ, but he did believe in a God of Justice, in a God that could not tolerate human slavery or injustice among his human kind. He had lived to learn and to know that his own judgment of men was reliable and right, and hence he gradually, but easily and certainly, overshadowed all his associates and contemporaries, and as a character stands alone from his rough-hewn cradle to his marbled tomb. In all that eventful journey he knew his own ability rightly and neither overestimated it nor underestimated it, and he dared to assume dangerous posts of duty, and yet never flinched or doubted. He was therefore greater than the greatest man of his time. *He is the Agamemnon of History.*

No other man in history seems ever to have centered and focused universal interest in his every and minutest acts and personal characteristics like Lincoln. When standing he towered above his famous opponent, Douglass, fourteen inches, but when both were seated side by side he was but four inches higher, so exceptional were his legs and arms in length compared with his body.

In the Illinois Legislature he belonged to the famous "Long Nine," the name applied to the nine members from his section, of which he was the tallest, and was called the "Sangamon

Chief," their combined height being fifty-five feet. To them and to him were due the success of changing the State Capital from Vandalia to Springfield, Sangamon Co., in 1837.

It is remarkable how many men afterward famous were associated with Lincoln during his early or active life, including Peter Cartwright, famous preacher, Col. Ellsworth, first to fall in war, Col. Baker, hero who fell at Ball's Bluff, Stephen A. Douglass, patriot and opponent, Senator Lyman Trumbull, Governor Bissell, General John A. McClernand, Judge David Davis, and others.

He was born close to the famous Mason and Dixon's Line, about $39^{\circ} 33'$ north latitude, marking the line limit of slavery and hence naturally conservative as to Northern and Southern opinions.

He was not wholly free from the local superstitions of the Kentucky pioneer times, and the quick and living secrets of Nature, while real and understood, still carried a tinge of the marvelous, for night winds, dark forests, swelling streams, cries of wild beasts, sudden deaths, moaning trees, and avenging storms, sometimes suggest strange thoughts to the wisest minds.

The well-timed hit on the lightning rod of the not over-consistent George Forquer, in his legislative canvass, recalls his clear and forceful side when his opponent assumed in public the air of a superior and prodded young Lincoln in his coarse dress of homespun clothes with lack of experience and ability, and Lincoln in thoughtful manner replied and, reviewing Forquer's follies and gullible nature as the prey of seductive agents, said that while he perhaps had many or most of the faults ascribed to him he was grateful that he "*did not have to erect a*

lightning rod over his home to ward off the vengeance of an offended God" as Forquer had. As lightning rods were just then being introduced and were under ban with the majority of the Illinois people Forquer was silenced.

The Shields incident, when Lincoln was forced as he thought to accept the challenge to fight a duel, after writing the anonymous letters *as a widow* from the "LOST TOWNSHIPS," shows his final faith and reliance in sound every day *man sense*. James Shields was State Auditor, and a rather excitable Irish gentleman from Tyrone, Ireland, and took mortal offense at the letters, as he imagined as a Democrat that they reflected upon his personal honesty in office, and no amount of persuasion by friends could satisfy him of Lincoln's intended good nature, and so the challenge was forced upon Lincoln, and having choice of weapons, he, on the same principle which in later years actuated John F. Potter in Congress with Pryor, chose cavalry broadswords. The day came and the parties met—Shields, a little, large-headed and firey man, and Lincoln of giant stature. At the final moment Shields gladly agreed to withdraw if his antagonist would assert that he only meant to make a political point as a Whig against a Democrat. Lincoln sensibly agreed. Asked later what he intended to do had they fought, he said, "*I should have used the advantage of my arms and legs and simplg split him from head to heel.*"

It was nothing less than unique that upon his election to the Presidency he should appoint as his Cabinet and constant advisers the very men who were his opponents in the Republican National Convention for the nomination at Chi-

cago in 1860, and yet by that act he calmed and pacified all wounded aspirations, and though regarded as a dangerous move politically, it showed Lincoln's just and benevolent heart, his far-seeing judgment and his calm consciousness in his own ability to remain absolutely President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States.

The offense and as some felt the ungrateful if not disloyal conduct of his Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, in the treacherous storm and excitement of his second campaign in 1864, when Chase publicly became a candidate against his chief, again showed how truly great Lincoln was, and his words on this occasion and his subsequent act in appointing Secretary Chase to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, proves him the towering political master and safe, unselfish patriot that he was.

The intense honesty shown in his settling accounts with the Government when postmaster at New Salem, when he months afterwards produced the exact amount to a dollar and a cent in the adjustment, and not only exact but identical coins received by him in the office, all laid away sacredly awaiting the official accounting, although he had been sorely pressed in the meantime for money.

His stories have been retold, repeated and revamped until much falsehood has been mixed with originals, all of which were pointed and practical and always prepared and thought out for purpose and to convince forcibly. A Lincoln story usually carries its own evidence of truth and originality. Sometimes they carried not only conviction but were calculated to cut or

even humiliate if necessary. When his early antagonist at law, rather fresh and frothy, had talked at a rapid rate until he had tired court and jury, and for lack of facts sat down to the relief of all, Lincoln in his thoughtful way said: "Your honor has observed the misfortune of the opposing counsel, as it is clear that he cannot work his mind and his voice at the same time, for the instant his tongue starts it goes so fast that the mind ceases to act; in fact he reminds me of the first steam vessel which appeared on the Sangamon river. It was noted for its efforts to navigate with ease, but it had a five-foot whistle and only a three-foot boiler, and every time they blew the whistle the boat had to stop still." This carries the true Lincoln brand.

The coarse jokes attributed to Lincoln never existed, and his intimates give testimony to that fact. In his associations with his Cabinet members he gave constant proof of his innate manliness, and nothing pleased him more in business meetings or official work than for all to call him Lincoln. He disliked to be called Mr. President or Your Excellency, but felt relief to be called Lincoln, and always spoke to his Ministers as Bates, Stanton, Chase and Seward, though he never failed or missed seeing and appreciating the ludicrous and funny side to all things.

He was a born reasoner, and when a mere boy, after borrowing the Crawford copy of Weem's Life of Washington, and having left it in the log crevice in his Indiana home where it got soaked by a shower during the night, he agreed to work three days pulling corn for the close-fisted Crawford to settle the account; he first asked if the three days' work was to pay for the *damage done the book or for the book itself*, and as

Crawford thought the book of no use, he said it would pay for the book, and so *Lincoln became the owner of his first actual book*, and it proved a good bargain too; and many a reader to-day would gladly pay three hundred dollars for this same book could they secure it for posterity.

His check for \$5.00, made out while President, payable to "The one-legged colored man or bearer," and which has been immortalized by the Lincoln History Society of New York City; his letter to the little boy who met him on the street after he was nominated for President, spoke to him and shook hands with him, and who was taunted by his playmates in Springfield afterwards for claiming Lincoln's acquaintance, until the great-hearted man wrote in answer to the boy's childish letter of appeal and stated over his signature while President of the United States, that he was glad to certify that he saw and remembered the boy and shook hands with him, and thus the boy became a hero.

This same sincerity and frankness was ever his strength and safety, and served as faithfully in the diplomacy of Nations and as easily and verily changed the fate of the American Continent, for while the trained and erudite Seward battled nervously with the ponderous and lugubrious ambiguities of Lord Palmerston, Lincoln had written a plain letter in plain and touching language to Queen Victoria direct, and appealed to her as a pure and noble woman to assure him in his trying ordeal against the sins of a century, that his efforts as a man threatened by rebellion yet seeking to maintain a friendly government and in opposition to the spread of human slavery, should not be injured and weighted by England's enmity. On a bright Sunday

morning he received her more than Queenly answer by mail, saying she realized the burdens and dangers to his Government, and that slavery should not receive her aid or influence, and that the American Government under his guidance would never need to fear from her people while she was acknowledged Queen of England. *He had won by a man's sense what diplomacy never secured*, and it was long afterwards that Seward learned this great historic fact.

Lincoln's was the Faith that never faltered, and was built on truth and sense.

Lincoln was pure in heart. He not only loved right but he was grand enough to do right. He hated wrong and he did no wrong. He forgave to the last and loved forgiveness itself, and yet he needed little or none for himself. Hear his tender fatherly voice as he whispers to little "Blossom" the pardon for her erring brother. See him as he dictates that immortal dispatch saving the tired soldier and sleeping sentinel, Scott, from an unmerited death. Think of his transcendent attitude in his position of almost unlimited power, as his acts of forgiveness fret and chafe the impatient generals who clamor for discipline at the expense of life, as he says: *Gentlemen, I cannot take the lives of these boys who love their country but who have broken the rules of warfare in obedience to the demands of exhausted nature.* His mantle has fallen upon no man. It is the heritage of America, the crown jewel of the world, and the hand of sacrifice alone shall ever touch it.

Let not the prude or the supercilious assume to blush at his humble or even doubtful origin. Let them brush their dormant intelligence and remember who was William the Conqueror of

England, and who was Charles Martel or "Charles the Hammer," who saved Christian civilization to Europe and who drove back in the Vale of the Roncevalles the swelling tide of Moslemism in the decisive battle of Poitiers. Let them remember that *Abraham Lincoln was a man and as a man was the greatest compliment that has ever been given or paid to the human race*, and likewise that he was never the champion of the prude, the dude or the false; and aristocracy has no power to either harm or heighten his glory now, and neither prudes, puppets nor apologizers have any place in the following of his mighty train.

Lincoln could scarcely sing a note, but music was to his soul a thing divine, and Poetry and Song may lay their garlands upon his tomb with perfect confidence, for his character can absorb all their beauties and will glorify every author. His was the hand that wrote the request: "Please ask Philip Phillips to sing again to-night '*Your Mission*,' but do not say I said so."

Abraham Lincoln is the man who gave his first biographer a kindly but knowing look when he found that he had stated that Lincoln had read Plutarch's Lives and had turned their sterling virtues to his own good account and character, who did not even correct the statement in the proof sheet; but a week later, when that same proof sheet had been revised and was then ready for the printer, he with equal kindness and with a twinkling eye informed his biographer, Mr. John Locke Scripps, that *in the meantime* he had read Plutarch from cover to cover and had not skipped even a single word, and that *now* the biography was correct and true and might be printed.

Here is a man who, while he may have said boyish things, and even followed the rougher customs of rollicking youth in the sturdy land of the pioneer, *yet in all the years of the prime of his manhood he was never known to say a foolish thing.* A man who constantly believed in himself and believed that he was being fitted for a great purpose, and went on patiently and not unconsciously, preparing to accept the highest post when the hour should strike. A man who was never surprised by the biggest events, the patient, sad, and yet ever rippling humorist who was great enough in the darkest hour to turn the serious incident into sunshine and laughter, thus giving to his nature that natural and joyous vent from the dangers of growing and crushing responsibility.

The man who never received or paid out an ill-earned or dishonest dollar in his whole life. The man who never had any use for either tobacco, gambling, dissipation or liquor; and with the gentle exception of poorly played billiards with a selected friend, on rare occasions, wasted no time upon idle pastime or artificial sports.

The man to whom criticism and discouragements served only as friction the better to propel the great engine of his mind as it tugged on the up grade of events. The man who stood self-poised while he saw and realized that the die was being cast and saw the molten metal of his own wondrous history poured into the mold of immortality.

Surely Fate loved Lincoln, and in her longings she gave him the deathless kiss that he might never leave her.

While others quaked with fear at the gathering storm, he grasped the helm with giant

grip as the great ship of state rode into the roar and crash of the hurricane and held it firm and safe until the lightnings had ceased to play and until the vanishing clouds threw their lessening shadows over her deck, and until the big waves had done their worst, and until ripples only patted her storm-beaten sides and the great white harbor was once more in view with its sunshine and its peace. Romance and miracle blend in the heavens as the sun bursts upon the scene, for as the last, long peal of thunder dies away in the distance, and the Rainbow of Peace appears, a sudden bolt from the clearing sky struck him dumb and dead on the deck, and *the Great Loving Captain had gone to his reward in the flower of his faith and in the full strength of his giant manhood.*

It has been said that “God buries His workmen but carries on His work,” and this great truth covers the life and martyrdom of Abraham Lincoln, the bravest, the most courageous, the most useful, the kindest, the tenderest, *the sweetest memory that has thus far appeared, in human form, within the Vestibule of Time.*



Very truly yours,

John E. Burton
" "

71.2009.084.07948

